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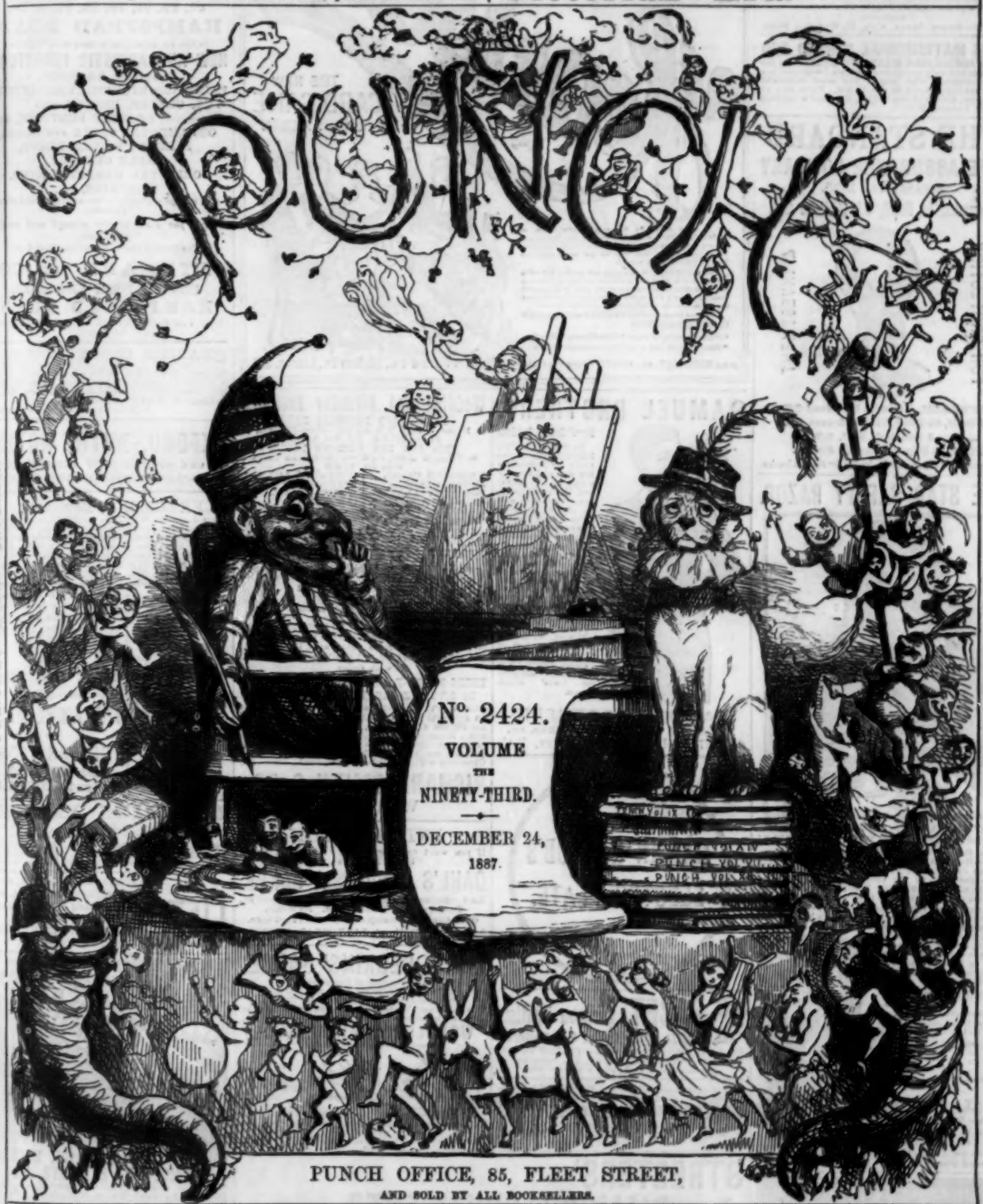

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THE LETTER-BAG OF TOBY, M.P.

FROM OLD MORALITY.

"Here comes a young fellow of excellent pith,
Fate tried to conceal him by naming him SMITH."

Henley, Saturday.

DEAR TOBY, AHOY!

WHERE are *you* bound? Haul on the bowline; brace up amidships; sling your hammock; belay all hands and stand by ready to pounce.

Excuse this little outburst. The fact is, I am about to cut for awhile landlubber associations, and am going cruising in my *Pandora's* box, or rather berth. My sea lingo is getting a little rusty, so I practise it wherever I have an opportunity, and thought you wouldn't mind my making one with you. I am going off to spend Christmas and New Year's time at Pau. You've heard of Pau, of course? I was first attracted to the place by coming across the beautiful line from GOLDSMITH—or was it BACON?

"Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Pau."

I'm not at all drawn towards the Scheldt. I never was lazy myself, and have no sympathy with laziness in others. But it is different with Pau, don't you know. I have been tied to the desk too long. I had a heavy time of it during the Parliamentary Session. They used to chaff me about being "on the pounce." It is all very well, but the attitude is one which, preserved through successive nights, becomes exhausting. I have had enough of it, and feel a strong desire to wander. The Pau is wandering. Why should we not wander together, arm in arm as it were? Anyhow, I mean to try. So bear a hand with your lee-scuppers; haul round the mainmast, up with your hatches, and keep the helm hard down on the South-West-by-East-Half-East. I have pounced enough on the Parnellites. Now I shall pounce on Pau.

I feel the necessity for taking a good rest, for I know we are going to have it pretty stiff next Session. B-LF-R, who is getting more cocky than ever, goes about comforting us with assurances that he will make matters smooth. "Is there anyone particular you can't abear?" he said to me only yesterday, with an annoying air of patronage. "Is there anyone of the Irish Members you would like put out of the way for the earliest and freshest months of the Session? If so, name your man, and I'll oblige you. I have got six of 'em lagged now, and there's a clear six weeks before Parliament meets. It's amazing how we can smooth the way by then."

I don't altogether like this solicitude on the part of B-LF-R for making smooth water in the House next Session. There is a persistent rumour about that he thinks he can lead the House better than anyone else, and that the Markiss is inclined to humour him. He has never said this in private conversation with me, though he has not made any attempt to disguise his conviction that he could take charge of the Army, the Navy, the Home Office, the Board of Trade, or even the Exchequer. Now I come to think of it, he may, in talking to G-SCH-N, leave out reference to the Exchequer, and substitute the Leadership of the House of Commons, and so with the others. I should certainly like to see him in my place for a week, with GR-ND-LPH on the corner of the bench behind. It is true that of late GR-ND-LPH has considerably flattened down. Having found that impudence and caprice don't pay, he is going in for dulness and respectability. But I fancy the sight of ARTH-R B-LF-R leading the House, and trying to lead him, would be too much. The swept and garnished place would be reoccupied, and his last state would be worse than his first. B-LF-R can't very well send him to a plank bed, and will have to make the best of him.

I rather fancy GR-ND-LPH must know, or think he knows, something about this little plot for promoting the nephew, which accounts for his latest impertinence. "And what title do you mean to take when you go to the House of Lords, H. W.?" he asked me the other day. (He always calls me "H. W." which he thinks is an improvement upon DIZZY'S hesitation as to the sequence of the initials.) "How would Baron BOOKSTALL suit?" he added, trying to look harmless. That only shows the inherent vulgarity which underlies the thin veneer of his sometime courtly manner. I never forget what the Markiss once said about him. "Scratch R-ND-LPH CH-RCH-LL," said he, "and you'll find TIM H-LY," which I thought at the time was a little hard on T-M.

You will not, I trust, dear TOBY, take it for granted that I am contemplating a near removal to the House of Lords, if I confess that I *have* sometimes thought over the title I should assume if my duty to my country led me to change my state. I belong, as you know, to one of the oldest families among mankind. It's all very well for BR-SS-Y to talk about coming over with the Conqueror. We came in with the Flood, or shortly after. TUBAL CAIN, the founder of our family, was a century or two before BOIS DE GUILBERT, FRONT-DE-BŒUF, or even the SIEUR DE BRESCI. What do you think of Lord TUBAL-CAIN? Would you recognise in that stately and ermined peer, TUBAL-CAIN, of Henley, your old friend of 217, Strand? I wis not. But that, as GL-DST-NE says, belongs to the dim and distant future. I beg to move that the question be now put. Oars! Steady, there! Pull away!

Yours, sheer off, W. H. SM-TH.

ROSES IN DECEMBER.

SIR,—Strange as it may appear to you, Sir, as a London playgoer, I had never seen *The Two Roses* till last night. How this "celebrated comedy" ever acquired its celebrity is, I confess, beyond me, for the plot is poor, and in the dialogue there is nothing quotable, though the phrase, "a little cheque," forces itself on one's memory by frequent iteration. You, Sir, saw it with its original cast, and I take it that a play of this sort requires certain surroundings to insure its immediate success, just as a rich joke, when deprived of its original accidental accessories, is found to be a very poor joke, or no joke at all. This play by Mr. ALBERY I should have thought would have been, as Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON might have said, Al-bery'd and forgotten long ago. Yet it lives,—at all events, it has been revived.

A Manager does not revive a piece which was not originally produced at his theatre without some pretty good reason for so doing. He must, at least, be fairly confident of its attractive powers as, at all events, a remunerative stop-gap; and I am informed that this piece has been revived, once before, by Mr. HENRY IRVING at the Lyceum. This is ancient history to you, Sir. After the revival, and the unwonted exercise of a long run (did it have a long run?), I should have supposed that there could not have been much life left in it. Yet apparently there is. The acting is, on the whole, good, and some of it very good. WILLIAM FARREN, one of the best of English players, makes all that is to be made (as it seems to me, who did not see Mr. IRVING) out of *Digby Grand*. Mr. GIDDENS is an excellent blind *Caleb* (a very clever actor must be Mr. GIDDENS), and Mr. DAVID JAMES simply *is* "Our Mr. JENKINS." MAUDE MILLETT is pretty and graceful, and the whole entertainment entertaining. But still, how it ever became a celebrated comedy—

"Well, that I cannot tell," said he,
"But *t'was* a famous Comedy."

And by crammed houses it is, I hear, being fully appreciated. Indeed, I should only say, judging by this Criterion on the night I was present, it is in for another long run.

Yours, LITTLE PETERKIN.

SHAKSPEARE UP AGAIN.—A Baconian writes to ask if there isn't sufficient proof of SHAKSPEARE'S affinity to BACON in Ham let alone?

WORTH CULTIVATING.

Ex-Premier sings:—

MY name 's WILLIAM GLADSTONE, I live at fair Harwarden,
I 'm Welshman at heart; this gold-find in North Wales
At the Gwynfynydd Mine I do trust will bring fortune
To all who are born 'midst these mountains and vales.
Yes, indeed, and all places, though foreign and beautiful,
This brave little country I prize far above;
For indeed in my heart I do love the Principality,
And you, JENNY JONES, too, in truth I do love.

For fifty long years I 've ploughed Politics' ocean,
And served my full time in the gallant State-ship;
And indeed, goodness knows, I 've braved many engagements,
And many dark storms 'twixt the cup and the lip,
I 've tried all the parties now, Tory, Whig, Radical,
Smiled on each in its turn, as to win me each strove;
But I said in my heart, little Wales I love chiefly,
And sweet JENNY JONES, too, in truth I do love.

I agree with PARNELL, and the Lord Mayor of Dublin,
In loving fair Erin, of Islands the Queen;
And having worn Blue, Buff, and Red in succession,
I can't see much harm in now wearing the Green.

"WHERE ARE THE POLICE?!"

MRS. HOWTHDOWN AND HER DAUGHTERS, WHO ARE IN TOWN FOR THE CATTLE-SHOW, ARE DISGUSTED BY THE AGGRESSIVE VULGARITY OF THE LONDON STREET-BOY, AND THINK IT OUGHT TO BE "PUT A STOP TO"!

Juvenile Baked Potato Vendor (to Crossing-Sweeper). "'SAY, BILL, 'ERE Y'ARE! THEM 'LL BE FUST AND SECOND PRIZE, AND 'IGHLY COMMENDED!!"

But not e'en Hibernia, the sweet and the sorrowful,
Like you, my dear charmer, my passion can move;
For, indeed, in my heart I love "gallant little Wales," I do;
And sweet JENNY JONES, too, in truth I do love!

I parted long since from the home of my fathers,
And then JENNY JONES was a dowerless lass;
But now I'm a grey and storm-beaten old mariner,
To wealth, she, through brave PRITCHARD-MORGAN, shall pass.
May Gold—and Home Rule—bring you wealth and contentment,
And ne'er from my Party, my dear, may you rove:
For indeed in our hearts we all love Wales tremendously,
And you, JENNY JONES, dear, till death will I love!

[*Left philandering.*

A VISIT TO "THE LICENSED VISTLERS."

IN the Winter Exhibition of the Royal Society of British Artists, who, under their distinguished President, JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER, may now be known as the "Licensed Vistlers," there is some good work, and especially two sketches, 77, 83, and 335, by JAMES HAYLLAR, R.B.A.; 319, by H. G. GLINDON, R.B.A.; SIMMONS'S "*Sunrise*," 330; SOLOMON'S; 454, Professor GARTZ (pretty subject); 458, by HENLEY, R.B.A.; 466, by WALTERS, R.B.A.

There is a remarkable picture of, apparently, A Serious Masher, which turns out to be a portrait of Mr. WILLARD, the actor who so cleverly impersonates modern stage villains as to be known as "Willinous WILLARD," by SIDNEY STARR, R.B.A. Artistic STARR painting Theatrical Star; quite right. No. 293 is a sorry sight—the picture of a nice portly young man trying to look like Lord ROSEBERY, but with the dye coming off his hair in evident patches. Very clever effect this, by THEODORE ROUSSEL, R.B.A.

Go and see No. 341, by WILLIAM STOTT, of Oldham, R.B.A.,—a name that sounds quite Shakspearian, like "Goodman Puff of Barson,"—and give yourself three guesses at what W. S. of Oldham means by it. It represents a very carotty-haired young woman, looking pale as a turnip—"white flesh," as the gardeners say—taking a bathe in the sea when no one is looking, and where police regulations are not in force. She is so tallowy in face and flesh colour, and her hair so flaming red, that the title might be, "*A 'Dip' in the Sea.*" Well, this is WILLIAM STOTT of Oldham's "*Venus;*" and if you'll turn to No. 183, you will see the same young person, looking none the better for her bath, clothed, with carrots dressed, and neatly bound up, sitting pensively *chez-elle*, probably regretting her recent escapade, and hoping that no one has seen her. Little does she know that WILLIAM STOTT of Oldham has stotted her down in his note-book. 326, "*Hard Hit*," by R. J. GORDON, R.B.A., is clever; but the meaning of its title, as illustrated by a weeping woman flinging herself across the knees of a drunken-looking man, is not quite clear. Has he hit her hard, and is that why she is so distressed? or has his head received a nasty thwack, as indicated by the white hat, lying on the table, twisted out of all shape?

At the end of the Catalogue is printed a list of the prices, from which it will be seen what value the artists themselves set on their own pictures. The President of the Licensed Vistlers exhibits only twenty pictures, sixteen of which have no price affixed to them in the list, and are therefore evidently gems, and priceless.

Founded on Fact.

A LARGE lot of ornithologists assembled the other day at Mr. J. C. STEVENS'S Auction Rooms to attend the sale of an egg of the Great Auk—a seafowl, 'ARRY, not a falcon. Great Auks' eggs are precious. This one was knocked down to an enthusiastic gentleman for 160 guineas. Some years ago two eggs of a Great Auk, sold, of course, by auktion, fetched, respectively, 100 and 200 guineas, although both broken, and that before they were knocked down. Surely the Great Auk must have been the original bird signified in tradition under the name of the legendary goose that laid the golden eggs.

THE Premier of the French Cabinet may be well described as "*Nulli Secundus.*" He is second to nobody, for the President is Nobody—to speak of.

FURNISHING FICTIONISTS.

IN the *Atalanta Magazine*, for this month, (which by its title, should be ahead of all competitors until the *homme à la pomme* appears) Mr. WALTER BESANT has an article "On the writing of Novels," in which he offers his advice to young girls afflicted with irrepressible scribblemania,—*i.e.* "girls who try to write stories, and burn to write novels,"—as to the best and easiest means of attaining their object. *Advice gratis* is, as we all know, of the gratis't value, and Mr. BESANT offers his two penn'orth-of-"all-sorts and conditions," to embryonic authoresses, but had *Mr. Punch* been dealing with these dear little literary aspirants, he would have simply repeated his world-famed epigrammatic advice to "persons about to marry," and said, most unequivocally, to girls about to write novels—"Don't." Not so Mr. BESANT, who proceeds to lay down rules for those "who wish to acquire the art of fiction." He commences with, "*Practise writing, something original every day*,"—"*Cultivate the habit of observation*," and so on, in good old-fashioned copy-book style.

We will assist him with some rules for those to whom Mr. W. BESANT gives this advice: "Be bold: never mind ridicule," . . . . "State fairly, what ordinary people never understand, that Fiction, like Painting, is an Art, and that you are setting yourself to the acquisition of that Art, if it be in your power, whatever may come of it in the end."

Very good. Now here is, as the Cookery books have it, "Another and a shorter way."

To acquire the Art of Fiction.—Clearly understand that Fiction is the opposite of Fact. If you invariably state facts, you become a matter-of-fact sort of person. No Genius is a matter-of-fact sort of person. So to "acquire the Art of Fiction," *you must never tell the truth. Practice telling some original lie every day.* If it be a description of scenery—well, this offers a large field—several large fields. Give an account to your relatives, or to your friends at a distance of the walk you have taken in the morning. First of all, of course, to be quite perfect, *you must not have been out of the house.* You will then proceed to describe the roaring Waterfalls over which you leaped, your hairbreadth escapes, &c., &c., and always remember that, as Mr. BESANT says, "description is not slavish enumeration."

RULE I.—*Tell a lie.* RULE II.—*Don't stick to it, but tell another, and a bigger one.* Pile 'em up, and thus at last you may become an unrivalled Fictionist.

RULE III.—"*Work regularly, at certain hours.*" Ascertain the time the Lark rises, and be up with it. Always be up to time, and to any amount of Larks. Let everybody in the house know you're at work. Sing as the Lark does, and be joyous. Insist on your room being fitted up for work,—at your parents' expense, of course,—with writing-desk, silver inkstand, paper, pens, a library of books, &c., and you must let it be distinctly understood by everyone that you are "not to be disturbed on any account," as you are going in for being a Fictionist.

RULE IV.—"Read no Rubbish," says Mr. BESANT. But this is what every author would say, making certain exceptions. But we should say, "*Read Everything.*" *Then begin to write.* Here is an example: say you read *Pickwick*. Well, you *write* a book called *Nikpik*, a Russian story, plot in St. Petersburg, characters, *Nikpik*, *Kinkel*, *Grazmod*, and *Putmann*. You represent a sporting scene where *Putmann*, with his eyes shut, kills a bird, and afterwards *Kinkel* wounds *Putmann*. "Hullo," says the reader, "uncommonly like *Pickwick*, and writes impetuously and indignantly to papers. Whereupon, you write in reply, saying "it may be so: *les grands esprits se rencontrent*: but that you have never heard of *Pickwick*, much less read it." By this time everyone will allow that you are entitled to be regarded as the greatest Fictionist of the age.

Other rules Mr. BESANT gives, for which anyone sufficiently interested in detecting the errors of his advice *gratis*, may search the *Atalanta Magazine* with considerable profit to himself (or herself) especially if he reads *A Christmas Carol*, by CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI, and one tail of *Three Lions*, by that undefeated Fictionist, Mr. RIDER HAGGARD.

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

PALINDROMES, by G. R. CLARKE, is a series of cruelly ingenious verbal cranks—"cranks" seems to be the word, since they are neither quips, quirks, puns, nor jests, consisting of sentences so arranged that, read backwards or forwards, they are precisely the same. An example of this is, "*Was it a rat I saw?*" The illustrations are comically amateurish, and amateurishly comic, but one of the best, "*Selim smiles*," is rather in the early Thackerayan style of pictorial art. The palindromical amusement will probably develop itself, as the acrostic family has done, and we shall soon be reading in "Answers to Correspondents" that their puzzle is referred to in "The Palindromical Editor." The little book is published, as any experienced joker in Scotland might have guessed, by Messrs. BRYCE AND SONS, Glasgow, and if you buy it, "Bang goes a shilling."

Approbation from *Mr. Punch* is praise indeed, and where he has given his favourable opinion of any book, it immediately attracts the public attention, and goes to any number of editions. So has it chanced with *Frith's Recollections*, which has now reached its third edition; and once *Mr. Punch* spoke well of the Jubilee Edition of *Pickwick*, which has now been re-issued with some of the original sketches by "Buss,"—to many it will be a surprise that *Mr. Pickwick* ever took a buss, except under the mistletoe at Dingley Dell,—which are fairly clever, though one of them, the cricketing scene, might have been omitted without damaging the artistic character of the republication. There is a sketch by JOHN LEECH, illustrating the moment in the *Bagman's Story* when the old arm-chair wakes up *Tom Smart*, and assumes the form and features of a gouty, but wickedly sly, old gentleman, which alone is "worth all the money." It is a real Christmas picture; and indeed a small volume of *Tales from Pickwick*, illustrated by fanciful and humorous artists, would make a capital Christmas Book of the good old Dickensian sort. *Mr. Punch* has given the hint: *fiat!*

By the way, I see an advertisement of a book quoting opinions of the Press as to its being "the funniest book of the present reign." Heavens! It is only necessary to mention *Pickwick*, which is replete with such real fun, as makes the reader roar with laughter irrepressible, besides being full of genuine humour. BARON DE BOOK WORMS.

"I BELIEVE," said Mrs. R.'s nephew, meditatively, "that Paris will have a 'Directory' again." "Why not?" retorted Mrs. RAM. "Why shouldn't Paris have a Directory? London has—*Kelly's Directory*—and most useful it is!"

THE LAY OF LAWRENCE MOOR!

A TRUE STORY.

Four brave men set sail from Whalsey,
In their open fishing-smack,
Four strong fellows left the Shetlands,
Only one at last came back.
Hearken how the wind is howling,
Close the curtains; shut the door,
Whilst I tell the splendid story
Of a sailor—LAWRENCE MOOR!

Never yet has such a tempest,
Screamed around the Shetland homes,
Dealing death and devastation
Where the northern sailor roams.
Snow and hail in blinding fury,
Swept o'er forest, field and lea,
Deaf seemed Heaven to the praying
For the brave men out at sea!

Far at sea! four plucky fellows
Bending back and straining oar,
Hidden each from each in tempest,
That had blotted out the shore!
All at once the skipper steering,
Cheering, shouting—look ahead!
Heard a moan, his best companion
Fell in arms of duty—dead!

"For the love of home and Heaven,
Brave it out as I will do."
Shouts above the storm, the skipper,
Rallying his fainting crew,
"Let us pray, lads, all together,
Heaven may save us! Who can tell!"
But the prayer was scarcely uttered,
When another sailor fell!

Two brave men—were left in silence—
Whispering with shortened breath,
"Don't desert your pal," says LAWRENCE,
"Let us have it out with Death!
God has strength to still the waters,
We have pluck to keep afloat."
But the last man with a murmur,
Fell exhausted in the boat.

"ANDREW! Laddie!"—Death don't answer.
"TOM, old pal!" the faintest sigh,
"Left me all alone then, have ye?
Well *I* don't intend to die!"
Then he thought of home and children,
Back came mirrored waves of sin!
One lone man midst dead and dying,
Felt the water rushing in!

One hand on the oar to steer her,
One hand free to hoist the sail,
When he called—no mate to answer,
Sinking now—no boy to bail;
Toiling hour on hour exhausted,
Captain of a ghastly bier!
Till at last the tempest lifted,
And he sighted Lerwick Pier.

Home at last! the plucky sailor,
Home to children and to wife,
Home half dead to claim the honour,
That he 'd saved *one* brother's life,
Death defied! they found him kneeling,
Humbly on his cottage floor,
But they 'll pass to time the story,
Of that Sailor—LAWRENCE MOOR!

IN THE NICK OF TIME.—His Excellency, the Chinese Minister, LEW CHUI FUN, has left London for Paris, to present his credentials to President CARNOT. At this festive season of Merry Christmas, Frenchmen of all parties in politics will welcome such an Opportunist as FUN.

SHORTLY to be published, *The Life of Sims Reeves*, compiled from his own notes.

PICCADILLY PLAYERS.

A FEW evenings since, I assisted at a Members' Concert in Piccadilly, where a very fair exhibition of Amateur Musical talent was displayed by the "Strolling Players." The vocal part of the entertainment was especially good, thanks to the really charming singing of the Misses AGNES JANSON and HAMLIN. The geniuses in the Orchestra who are for all time, and any tune, managed occasionally to get a little out of hand in spite of Mr. NORFOLK MEGONE'S earnest conductorship. Taken all round, "The First Members' Concert" was so good that I should not have the smallest objection to attending the Second.

The Ancient Mariner with Mr. J. F. BARNETT'S brilliant music at St. James's Hall last Thursday night, held entranced a large audience which listened "like a three cars child" ("Had I three ears I'd hear thee," says *Macbeth*. Did COLERIDGE write SHAKSPEARE?—however, this has nothing much to do with the *cantata*, and so on we goes again)—so "the Mariner hath his Will" (which is almost conclusive evidence that COLERIDGE'S *Mariner* was written by WILL SHAKSPEARE) and we were all delighted. I hadn't a book. Who was ALBERT ROSS that the *Mariner* shot? Madame PATEY sang "*O Sleep, it is a Genteel Thing!*" (I think these were the words) with great feeling and expression. Beautiful idea, "sleep a genteel thing!" Somebody told me I was wrong, and that the poet wrote, "*O Sleep, it is a Gentle Thing!*" which anybody could have said, without being a poet. So I prefer my own version. The recitative (SANTLEY) and chorus (Everybody), about "the coming wind did roar," and something (I didn't catch what) was "like a sledge," and "the Moon was on its side and then upon its edge," which sounds just what a harvest moon would do after a good day's harvesting, were excellent.

Then followed Mr. C. V. STANFORD'S Symphony in F Minor, "*The Irish*," as my neighbour informed me, to which I replied, "Oh, indeed!" and appeared, as I hope, much interested; though what he meant I haven't the smallest idea. Who was my neighbour?—a very learned person who kept on drawing my attention to the excellent instrumentation, and the admirable use which the Composer had made of his "strings"—I didn't see that he had any "strings," but I said, "Ah, yes,"—his "Wood-wind and Horns." "Just observe his horns!" said my neighbour enthusiastically. He spoke of Mr. C. V. STANFORD as if he were drawing the portrait of Ancient Nicholas, as portrayed by CRUIKSHANK when illustrating *The Lay of S. Médard*, in the *Ingoldsby Legends*. A Composer with Strings, Wood-wind ("comest thou with blasts from——" &c., as BACONSPEARE hath it) and "horns" is the man to write a *cantata* entitled "Herne the Hunter," and I am not at all sure that there isn't a *Herne* already in existence, and that that Herne isn't His'n. After a pause (during which the orchestra continued playing) my neighbour begged me to notice that now the theme was, "Remember the glories of O'BRIEN the Brave," but at this point not wishing to enter into a political discussion which might have landed me in the police-station, I courteously, but firmly, wished him good night, and having signified to everybody generally the extreme pleasure I had derived from the entertainment provided by the Messrs. NOVELLO AND EWER, I gracefully withdrew, and am, No Fellow, but Ewers truly,

THE CRICKET ON THE HARP.

P.S.—*À propos* of music, I cannot refrain from mentioning the gathering of the *élite* who recently collected together to do honour to the talents of Mrs. DUTTON COOK. Madame ALBANI was in great force, and the fair *bénéficiaire* played with her customary grace and artistic feeling, eliciting the invariable result of unbounded applause. It is to be greatly regretted that the Public have not the opportunity of hearing Mrs. DUTTON COOK more frequently. She is certainly in the first rank of pianists and a sound musician.

"I HEAR," said Mrs. RAM, "that the Princess CHRISTIAN has written about the *Margarine of Baireuth*. I like to hear of Royalty interesting themselves in such matters. However," she added, "of course, they know which side their Bread's buttered, and like the butter, whether at home or abroad—that is, here or at Baireuth—to be of the very best. So do I."

"THE CRAMOPHONE."—New invention for repeating any number of crams over and over again. Useful to advertisers, quacks, &c., &c.

TOO CLEVER BY HALF.

"Out of every thousand men in the Army there are now 315 of superior education. . . . H.R.H. the Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief has directed Officers to use every means at their disposal to induce men to improve their education in order to obtain the certificate necessary for promotion."—*Daily Paper.*

SCENE—*The Barrack Square of the Royal Irish Bengal Essex Highlanders (Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein's Own). Members of the Regiment assembling for Morning Parade. A Company falling in.*

Captain Dash (*commanding A Company*). Ready for inspection, Sergeant?

Sergeant Babington Macaulay (*saluting*). Directly, Sir. I have called away the men from a discussion on the question of entail.

Captain. Dear me! You should not have done that. I shall be only too ready to assist them by any means in my power.

Sergeant. Well, Sir, they are now in close order. If you wish, I will open them out. (*Captain nods assent. To men.*) Open order! [*Flank files rear rank step back two paces.*

Corporal (*dressing flank files*). Steady!

Sergeant. March! (*Remainder of rear rank step back.*) Order arms! Stand at ease! [*He salutes* Captain, *and comes to attention.*

Captain. 'Tention! (*Company springs up to desired position.*) Now, my men, I hear that some of you require to know something about the Law of Entail. Now those of you who have taken any certificate from a University can take a pace to the front. March! (*The entire Company complies.*) Dear me! You seem to be very well educated. Eh, Sergeant?

Sergeant. Well, pretty well, Sir. We are not equal to E Company, although we can hold our own fairly against B, C, D, F, and G. As for H Company, it is out of the competition altogether. H Company is the best read Company in the Battalion, if not in the Regiment.

Captain. Well, what is the difficulty? Call out the man who started the subject. Perhaps I may be able to help him.

Sergeant (*salutes and turns to Company*). Private THOMAS ATKINS take three paces to your front. March! Now then, salute, Sir! (*Aside.*) This extra education makes them rusty with their drill.

Captain. Well, Private ATKINS, can I help you at all?

Private Atkins (*touching his rifle with his right hand*). A thousand thanks, Sir, for your extreme kindness and courtesy. Still I cannot fairly monopolise all your attention, as I was only one of many desirous of learning a little law.

Captain. I suppose you know all about the Feudal System?

Private (*smiling*). I can safely undertake to say that there is not a man in the Company who does not appreciate its provisions.

Captain. Quite so. Well, the practice of entail is founded more or less on the Feudal System. You understand the advantages and disadvantages of Primogeniture?

Private. Certainly, Sir. I suppose Borough English was rather before the time of the Norman Conquest?

Captain. I imagine so: but perhaps the best way will be for you all to come to my quarters, where I can explain the matter more fully to you than I can here. I have no doubt the Colonel will excuse the Company, if I inform him for what purpose we propose absenting ourselves. At any rate I will ask him.

Private. A million thanks, Sir. I am sure every man in the Company will be grateful to you.

Sergeant. Right about turn! Quick march! Halt! Front! Shoulder arms!

Captain. Stand them easy while I go away. (Sergeant *obeys order, and* Captain *approaches and salutes* Colonel.) Beg pardon, Sir, but may I march my Company to my quarters to give them a lecture on law?

Colonel (*rather querulously*). Well, DASH, of course I'm not going to say No; but it really is rather rough upon me. Here B Company has got permission to study botany, C Company the elements of engineering, D, F, and G chemistry. I shall be left with H Company, because they have nothing more to learn. What on earth shall I give them to do if you are off too?

Captain. Wouldn't presume to suggest, Sir; but mightn't H have a little practice in the rudiments of drill?

Colonel. By Jove, you are right! They are rusty enough! Very well, you may go.

[*Scene closes in upon A Company marching towards* Captain DASH'S *quarters, while the Adjutant gets H Company* (*with some difficulty*) *into something like a proper formation for receiving elementary instruction in the mysteries of "fours."*

A CIRCULAR NOTE.—The literary character of our leading statesmen of all shades of political opinion is well sustained at the present day. They are learned in all the 'ologies, including ap-ologies, of which art Mr. GLADSTONE and Mr. BALFOUR are by this time past-masters. Long may they live—and learn.

THE IRREVOCABLE PAST!

"This is truth the Poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things!"

"ALAS! IN LOOKING BACK OVER ONE'S LIFE, HOW MANY THINGS THERE ARE TO CAUSE ONE TO REGRET!"
"OH, YES, INDEED! I OFTEN REGRET I DIDN'T EAT MORE OYSTERS WHEN THEY WERE EIGHTPENCE A DOZEN!"

THE CHIMES.

(Dickens once again adapted to the Season and the Situation.)

HIGH up in the steeple of an old old Tower, of ancient foundation, somewhat incongruous and complicated in design, but of sound Constitution—as *everybody*, even the angriest campanological opponents, admitted—far above the light and the noise of the town, if far below the flying clouds that shadow it, dwelt the Chimes I tell of.

They were old Chimes, trust me. Centuries ago those Bells had been hung by our ancestors, so many centuries ago, that the register of their first suspension, the record of their first peal, was lost in antiquarian mist as impenetrable as the darkness of the belfry corners on a starless November night. They had had their donors and sponsors, these Bells; but time had mowed down their donors, and mislaid the names of their sponsors, and they now hung nameless and dateless, but sound and sonorous still, in that high old Tower, time-worn but steadfast and four-square to all winds, Party or otherwise, that have blown or that shall blow.

Not speechless though. Far from it. They had clear, loud, lusty, sounding voices, had these Bells; and far and wide they might be heard upon the wind. Much too sturdy Chimes, moreover, were they, to be dependent upon the mere pleasure of the wind, of any of the winds—Party or otherwise—aforementioned. They had been pulled at by many generations of ringers, pulled at sometimes skilfully, often awkwardly and ill; sometimes in tune, and with the well-ordered harmony which was natural to them; sometimes again, wildly and wilfully, by incompetent or angry ringers, ringers ill-matched and ill-accordant, who did their worst to mar their melody, and spoil their tunefulness, and upset their time, and make them sound, in the great Singer's words:—

"Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune, and harsh."

But the fault was ever less in the Bells than in the Bell-ringers. Cracked were they not, nor were they cacophonous; let their clappers swing free, and keep their throats unrusted and unclogged, and in skilled, and loyal, and well-conducted hands, they would ever sound out strongly and sweetly, and send forth on and against the wildest and angriest of the winds aforesaid, most excellent and inspiring music.

* * * * * *

Toby knew them well, those Bells, as did his great and genial Master. *Toby* was not a canine casuist. Being but a simple and loyal dog, he invested them with a strange and solemn character. They were so mysterious and mighty; often heard, and never seen; so high up, so far off, and so full of such a deep, strong melody, that he regarded them with a species of awe; and sometimes when he looked up at the dark arched windows in the tower, he half expected to be beckoned to by something which was not a Bell, and yet was what he had heard so often sounding in the Tower, the Spirit, namely, of Loyalty and Love, of Honour and of Home. For all this, *Toby* scouted with doggish disdain—being, like his Master, as sensible as loyal—a certain occasionally flying rumour that the Chimes were haunted, as implying the possibility of their being connected with any Evil thing. And *Toby*—no unlicked cub, but a considerate, composed old dog,—never puppyishly barked at the Bells. He would as soon have thought of baying the moon.

But he often had occasion to yap, warningly or reprovingly, at the Bell-ringers!

* * * * * *

Bow-wow-wow! It was the voice of *Toby*. It meant not, this time, either warning or reproof; rather amicable acknowledgment, and just a little surprise. Not fear, oh, no! not fear.

A Voice—was it a vision-voice, or the accents of the biggest of the Bells, or was it, perchance, the veritable Voice of Time himself, naturally and fitly vocal and audible at this particular Season?—sounded strangely through the shadowy belfry. Thus it seemed to speak, in words curiously pertinent to the moment, though *Toby* seemed to have heard them before in other connection and in other circumstances.

THE CHIMES.

Mr. Punch. "NOW THEN, MY LADS! ALL TOGETHER FOR ONCE!—CHRISTMAS TIME, YOU KNOW!!"

"The Voice of Time cries to Man, Advance! Time is for his advancement and improvement; for his greater worth, his greater happiness, his better life; his progress onward to that goal within its knowledge and its view, and set there in the period when Time and he began. Ages of darkness, wickedness, and violence have come and gone—millions uncountable have suffered, loved, and died—to point the way before him. Who seeks to turn him back, or stay him in his course, arrests a mighty engine which will strike the meddler dead, and be the fiercer and the wilder, ever, for its momentary check!"

"A rub for the reactionaries!" mused *Toby*.

"Who puts into the mouth of Time, or of its servants, a cry of lamentation for days which have had their trial and their failure, and have left deep traces of it which the blind may see—a cry that only serves the present time, by showing men how much it needs their help when any ears can listen to regrets for such a past—who does this does us wrong."

"A flout for our Fair-Traders!" thought *Toby*.

"Who hears in us, the Chimes, one note bespeaking disregard, or stern regard, of any hope, or joy, or sorrow, of the many-sorrowed throng; who hears us make response to any creed that gauges human passions and affections, as it gauges the amount of miserable food on which humanity may pine and wither, does us wrong."

"What would the contemners of the people's claims, the deriders of the people's miseries, make of *that*, I wonder?" meditated *Toby*.

"Who hears us echo the dull vermin of the earth, the Putters Down of crushed and broken natures, formed to be raised up higher than such maggots of the time can crawl or can conceive, does us wrong."

"Pity the shriekers for unlimited Suppression can't hear *this!*" cogitated *Toby*.

* * * * * *

Bow-wow-wow! Again it was the voice of *Toby*. This time it *did* mean warning, if not reproof. Not anger exactly; anger alone is scarce suited to the Christmas season.

The Bell-ringers were going it. With plenty of energy, unquestionably, but with scarcely as much discretion as might be desired. A rather mixed lot. Each one individually an excellent hand at the rope, no doubt. Evergreen WILL, of the leonine front, and flying silvery whisps of hair! Black-a-vised BOB, of the broad shoulders and resolute tug. Stolid, but sturdy HARRY, of the firmly-planted feet and granite grip! Fiery though mild-featured JOACHIM; sombre, smug-faced, but enthusiastic JOHN! Last, though perhaps hardly least (in his own estimation, at all events), rattling RANDOLPH, lightweight, none too firm of footing, but full of dash, and game to attempt a triple bob-major all by himself.

"*Pull* away, BOB," cried impetuous WILL, eagerly.

"Steady, WILL!" exclaimed Black-a-vised BOB, sardonically.

"Keep time, for goodness sake, JOHN," said accurate JOACHIM.

"Want your bell to be heard above all the rest!" murmured sombre JOHN.

"Are you trying to hang yourself, or pull the belfry down, RANDOLPH," muttered stolid HARRY, beneath his moustache.

"Oh, confound it; I could lick the lot of you!" shouted little RANDOLPH, tugging tremendously at his rope, and fairly carried off his feet by the recoil.

"*Bow-wow-wow!*" barked *Toby*.

"Right, my dog!" said his Master. "Good Bell-ringing, my boys, requires combination and subordination, unity of purpose as well as union of powers. A bull-like power of pull is not enough, or, by Jove! you'd all be crack campanologists. Come, Gentlemen, a Christmas Carillon at least should not be all cacophonous crash and clatter. All together, my lads, *for once;* or, rather, keep time, and touch, and tune, with due regard to the perfection of the peal and the credit of the glorious old Chimes!"

IN THEIR CRACKERS.

The Czar.—A brand-new map of the Balkan States with Prince BISMARCK's best compliments.

The Emperor of Austria.—A satisfactory explanation of recent Russian Military movements, with the CZAR's kindest regards.

Prince Bismarck.—German Security by arrangement, with the seasonable wishes of the Five Great Powers.

President Carnot.—A Ministry that will last him a fortnight with the good will of the two Chambers.

Lord Salisbury.—"A Hundred New Ways of Governing Ireland by Coercion." Christmas Edition.

Mr. O'Brien.—An Emerald-coloured Tweed suit, in which to sing by himself on Christmas Eve, "*The Wearing of the Green.*"

Mr. Chamberlain.—A very pretty kettle of fish, daintily and appropriately decorated with Canadian mottoes.

Mr. Gladstone.—The Donnybrook Fair Suit, "with Shillelagh complete," as advertised, done up in a neat parcel and addressed to him with the compliments of "the Party."

A LEARNED PROTEST.

RESPECTISSIME PUNCHI!

TU habes admissum, olim, Latinas litteras in tuis columnis. Memini unum TOMMIUM scribentem de Etone (istâ super-ratâ scholâ) et nunc forsitan accipies hanc contributionem antiqui Westminsterensis? Semper ego auditor tantum (JUVENALIS) quum nobilis ars Latinorum versorum est attacta? Non pro JOSEPHO! Volo nunc intrare meam protestationem contra aliqua verba Baronis BRAMWELL, alterâ die.

Facilis ascensus Parnassi sed revocare gradum.

"It's very easy to be a Poet, but you must have recourse to your gradus."

Baro dixit (Anglicè, quia, imagino, non noscit Latinum)[1] ut "he never got any good from the Latin verses he was obliged to write when a boy, and if a boy is to be made a poet, he had better begin in his own language." Dixit quoque, "it may be knowledge to know the names of those who killed BECKET (*sic*), and the precise date, but it is not wisdom or useful." (Quare, viâ, "BECKET," et non "Sanctus TOMMIUS à BECKETT, proprium nomen? Quid cheekum! Vel forte dicerem, quæ bucca! Vocabimusne Baronem BRAMWELL in futuro "BRAMWELL" simpliciter; vel, ut omittit "à," potius "BRAM'L"?)

Quoto has Philistinas deliverationes de "Tempora," et Editor "Temporum" propriissime scribit, "We should for our part (pro nostrâ portione) venture to doubt whether some of Lord BRAMWELL's (peto veniam, BRAM'L's) remarkable keenness of mind is not to be accounted for by the drilling which his Latin verses gave him—by the habit of twisting and turning (habitus contorquendi et vertendi) and adjusting thoughts and phrases which that old-fashioned exercise implies." Bene!

Sum ipse nunc Undergraduatus, et abandonavi Classicas linguas pro Scientiâ. Sed retineo meam Latinam—ut tu vides—et invenio id facile esse excellens in chemicis odoribus et in CICERONE simul.

Cogito ut Britannicus Publicus debet noscere *quam multum bonum* Latini versus sunt ad pueros.

1. Imprimis, illi ducunt ad usum *Gradûs ad Parnassum;* et, interrogo, quis liber potest comparare cum eo vel in elegantiâ styli, vel in copiositate verborum, vel in vero genio auctoris? Sum inclinatus cogitare ut auctor erat, in realitate, BACONIUS ipse; et si ita, id est alium exemplum quomodo Latini versus auxiliant homines scandere ad nobilissimas positiones in Statu.

2. Secundo loco, docent fraternum amorem inter pueros; quia quum unus socius est stumpatus pro verbo, alius donat illi correctum tippum, sub rosâ.

3. Tertium quid (non *quid* tobacconis!—Vide effectum, "habitûs contorquendi et vertendi," etc.!)—Versus elevant mentem, et associant nos cum grandibus auctoribus præteriti, ut OVIDIO, TIBULLO, et CAREYO. Quomodo possum noscere, nisi per "Gradum," ut *Amor* est "dulcis, blandus, jucundus, suavis," et eodem tempore "flagrans, acer, fervidus, indomitus, vigilans," etc.?

4. Quarto, discimus synonymos, sic utiles ad publicos homines (non homines *publicanos* intelligis! "Habitus contorquendi" iterum). Si Magister GLADSTONE non fecisset Latinos versus ut juvenis, non posset nunc donare viginti differentia nomina pro unâ re.

Finaliter, si Latini versus sunt missi ad Jerichonem, *ubi erit Ludus Westminsterensis in futuro?* Nullum alium argumentum est necessarium.

Manco tuus, ANTI-BRAMWELLIUS ACADEMICUS.

A CORRESPONDENT draws *Mr. Punch's* attention to an advertisement in a Cheltenham paper, from which this is an extract:—

"QUINCE JAM.—Prepared from Quinces, supposed by many to be the 'Forbidden Fruit.' This hitherto almost unknown luxury is much appreciated by those who have tried it."

Hasn't the enterprising and, of course, very old-established firm which advertises this luxury any recommendation in writing from "The fairest of her daughters," EVE? If so, let them produce the papyrus.

THE last Christmas Cards to arrive, are TAYLOR FOOT's "Merry Thoughts," &c., from Poland Street,—they're behind time; so very slow a-foot in coming. As practical jokes, the mince-pie cards are uncommonly good, and indeed the sham may be substituted for the real, by a mince pi-ous fraud allowable at Christmas time.

STRIVING AFTER THE IDEAL.

Grandpapa. "AH, JOHNNY! THERE ARE FEW BETTER THINGS THAN IRISH STEW!"

Johnny. "WHAT *ARE* THE FEW BETTER THINGS, GRANDPA?"

UNEMPLOYED.

A Christmas Carol for the Comfortable Classes.

OLD Father Christmas came once more,
His eye was bright if his hair was hoar,
And the old old gifts on his back he bore.

With the old loved legend now as then
The pleasantest ever inscribed by pen—
"Peace upon earth, goodwill to men."

What was it the good old greybeard saw?—
War's iron teeth, greed's gaping jaw,
And shaken order and broken law.

Each land ringed round with a fence of steel,
Each party snarling at other's heel;
None seeming loving, few looking leal.

Poverty spreading athwart the land,
With mutterings few dared understand,
Though they palsied Charity's helpful hand.

And the good old greybeard stood and gazed
At the thousand hearths where no Yule-fire blazed,
At the hate-led nations, the classes crazed.

"And oh!" he cried, "is it come, the time
When the land low grovels in greed and grime,
And heeds no longer my cheering chime?

"Is it past, all prospect of love's increase?
Is it time my rallying cry should cease—
'Peace and Good-will! Good-will and Peace!'?

"Is it fled, the hope that my heart has buoyed?
Is it finished, the labour in which I joyed?
Am *I* the chief of the Unemployed?"

THE DEAR DEPARTED.—He has departed, and he was dear—at the price, was the poor little Gorilla! He died at the Zoo just ten days ago. Was it owing to his being so generously dieted, and never getting "Monkey's allowance?" Jenny the Baboon refused to attend the funeral, which was strictly private. Her conduct has created some astonishment among the officials. A jarring note was struck by the Hyæna, which could not repress its laughter. He died intestate. The Gorilla's decease makes no change in the government of Monkey Island.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS APPARITION;

OR, THE PHANTOM BILL OF COSTS.

(A Legal Ghost Story for Christmas.)

I AM a highly respectable family ghost. I appear usually at two in the morning, wearing, what I believe is called in theatrical circles, a disguise cloak, and carrying a long blood-stained sword. I have one serious drawback. I have a shocking memory, and have entirely forgotten my identity. For the death of me I cannot remember why I became a ghost, and what on earth I ought to haunt. I fancy it should be some sort of castle, as I have an indistinct recollection of once frightening a man carrying some huge keys, from what I take must have been a portcullis, into fits. But this is merely conjecture, and I can't in the least account for my blood-stained sword. As I am really conscientious, this state of things has caused me serious regret. I have no wish to alarm the wrong people, nor to haunt the wrong place. The first is improper, and the second is *infra dig.* But what can I do? I find that I *must* appear at least once in every four-and-twenty hours, and my difficulty has been to so suit my time and place, that the least inconvenience should be given to the smallest number. Consequently, for many years I have been a nightly *habitué* of the South Kensington Museum. No doubt this arrangement would have continued for an indefinite period had I not been recently arrested by a Policeman for loitering in the picture-galleries, who only permitted me to vanish in blue fire (I prefer blue to red) on the condition that I did not re-enter the Institution.

Ousted from the South Kensington Museum, I determined not to visit any other public establishment. Partly because I was tired beyond measure of curiosities, and partly, because my dignity had been wounded by the incident that had severed my connection with the School of Art. Supplementary to this, I felt that I might be neglecting a duty by not discovering the proper place for my periodical apparitions. It occurred to me it would be a great comfort if I could but find the exact spot, where undisturbed, I could appear and disappear without fear of interruption, at any rate, from the profession, for I know that I should not be allowed to poach on the haunting-grounds of my fellow phantoms. As a matter of fact, I once had a terrible row in the Tower of London, (caused by Sir WALTER RALEIGH, Lord BALMARINO, and Lady JANE GREY objecting to my joining the little gathering there, on the score "that I did not belong to their set") which ended in my being ejected in the most undignified manner possible from the premises. However, I am pretty determined when I make up my mind, and I formed the resolution of leaving no stone unturned until I had discovered my proper destination.

My first experiments were most unsuccessful. I visited in succession about a hundred country-houses, but found them all tenanted with their rightful apparitions. My arrival was greeted, in each case, with abuse, more or less vigorous. Perhaps I received the greatest insults from a person (I cannot call him a gentleman) of the last century, who I discovered haunting a venerable mansion belonging to his grandson, with a view to giving their brand-new family an air of respectability.

At length I found a rather agreeable lady in white brocade, who carried her head in a bundle under her arm, and who was more inclined to be sociable than any ghost I had hitherto met.

"You cannot possibly remain here," she said, as she glided up a staircase and rattled some chains outside a bedroom door, "it would not be proper, besides it would be sure to be resented by ALFREDO, who rises every fifteenth of March from the moat to cut my head off in a fit of jealousy—he is *so* absurd! If I were you I should consult a Solicitor. I can recommend you one who hanged himself some years ago in the town over yonder. His great great great grandfather drew my marriage settlement; and ALFREDO, who has consulted him on several little matters, has every confidence in him. Why not see him? You will find him seated in his office (it belongs to his nephew in the daytime) from midnight to four in the morning. And now you must really go, as I have to frighten the occupants of this bed-chamber."

Thus urged, of course I could only bow and withdraw. I floated into the town and entered the Lawyer's office. I found its phantom occupant extremely obliging.

"The great difficulty," he said, when he had listened to my story,

INTERIORS AND EXTERIORS. No. 55.

IN LOWTHER ARCADIA AT CHRISTMAS TIME.

"is to ascertain your identity, which can only be done in the daytime. Have you ever appeared at noon?"

I admitted that I had, although I was obliged to confess that I had found my apparition then both feeble and unsatisfactory.

After consultation, we decided that perhaps we might find some trace of my antecedents in the Imbecile Inquiry Office, a Government Department devoted to the registration of human curiosities. It was not impossible that I might have been so extremely eccentric in my lifetime, that some trace of my doings might have been preserved in the archives of the *bureau*. The next morning, accompanied by my Lawyer, I visited the office, and was requested by a messenger to put in writing on a memorandum paper the object of my application. Fortunately the man was short-sighted, and did not appear to notice our appearance. I wrote what I wanted, and sent it up. In a few minutes the messenger returned.

"The Board is engaged at this moment, but if you like to stop, the Secretary will see you by-and-by." He then left us.

After waiting nearly an hour, my Lawyer and I came to the conclusion that we must have been forgotten, and determined to go upon a voyage of discovery on our own account. Leaving the waiting-room, we glided up a broad stone staircase and entered through a green-baize door a large apartment apparently filled with books. Seated at a desk was an amiable-looking, middle-aged gentleman surrounded with plans, papers, packets, and the usual paraphernalia of a Government Office. Between this room and another was a second green-baize door dividing the two apartments the one from the other. In the second room we saw several other amiable-looking middle-aged gentlemen, grouped round a long table, and apparently engaged in discussing sandwiches and sherry.

"I am sorry to disturb you," said my Lawyer, courteously. The amiable-looking middle-aged gentleman at the desk, raised his eyes, looked at us, started violently, and turned as white as a sheet. My Solicitor continued, "We want to know——"

He could get no further. The gentleman jumped up from his desk in an agony of terror, and, before we could prevent his departure, disappeared with an unearthly yell, through the baize door into the second apartment. The door was then hurriedly locked, and all we could do would not induce any of the occupants of the room to open it. We tried in vain all sorts of inducements, from the rattling of heavy chains up to thunder-thumps. Some little time elapsed, and then the short-sighted messenger made his appearance.

"I never told you to come up," said he, in an aggrieved tone, "and you've got me into trouble. You must be off. The Board say that your application, whatever it is, can't be entertained."

To retire was all we could do—and we did it. On regaining the street, I sorrowfully bade my Solicitor good-bye.

"Oh dear no, Sir," he said, with the ghost of a smile. "You have quite forgotten one little formality—my Bill of Costs."

Upon this he produced an enormous roll of paper! The rest of my story can be briefly told. Unable to pay my Lawyer's bill, I was compelled to seek refuge in a country where I could not be reached by the Extradition law. I took a passage in *The Flying Dutchman*, and went to Spain. I am now settled in Grenada, where I am believed by the peasantry to be an English ghost that has escaped from a branch of the Moorish Alhambra that has been recently established in Leicester Square. I find some consolation in the thought that those whom I now haunt seem to be growing rather fond of me. I trust that this is not a specimen of the national politeness, and that the affection they apparently entertain towards me is not merely assumed to save me unnecessary embarrassment.

WAITING HIS ORDERS.

THE HOME SECRETARY, after the revelations made by a distinguished member of the Representative body of Theatrical Managers and Music Hall Proprietors that called upon him last week to protest against the further extension of Inspecting Powers to the

Augustus Druriolanus opposing the Invasion of Plancus Operator Autocraticus.

Metropolitan Board, having expressed a wish to hear something still further of the correspondence, said to be of a blackmailing character, which was referred to in the course of the proceedings, the Deputation again called on him yesterday afternoon for the purpose of supplying him with fresh information on the subject.

In re-introducing them, Mr. JACKSON PARTLAND, M.P., said that since their last interview they had heard that, with a view to the better control of the correspondence of subordinate officials of the Board, an enterprising firm of publishers had undertaken to provide for their use A COMPLETE LETTER-WRITER, a few of the proof-sheets of which had chanced to come into their possession. As they seemed to have some bearing on the present case, they thought that perhaps the HOME SECRETARY might like to look at them. In presenting them to his notice, they felt it was hardly necessary to point out that a public Department from which such documents might be expected to issue was scarcely calculated to inspire that general confidence so essential to the smooth and efficient working that might reasonably be expected of it. The subjoined proof-sheets, which he appeared to peruse with much attention, were then handed to the HOME SECRETARY:—

From an Official of the Board to a Popular Manager, asking for Places during the Height of the Pantomime Season.

Metropolitan Board of Shirks Compromising Architect's Department, Spring Heel Gardens, February 17.

MY DEAR GUS,—(Excuse the familiarity, but it is a way we have on the "Board")—I know you are turning money away nightly, but you must really manage to let me have the Queen's Box, and the two others on each side of it (all three knocked into one) for three days—say, Monday, Thursday, and Friday next week. I wish to bring my grandfather, two aged aunts, my sister-in-law, all her children, and my own, and lots of cousins and connections who know my interest with you, and have asked me to get 'em good places. Don't say you can't do it, my dear boy, for you know *I can be nasty when I like*, and should be sorry to put you to the expense of clapping on another staircase or two to the upper circles. Ha! ha! that would be a joke, wouldn't it? However, let's hope it won't come to that. Yours ever, JOHN BEGG.

P.S.—If there's a difficulty about the boxes, I wouldn't mind a whole row of stalls right across the theatre in the best part. But mind, one or the other, *I must have.*

From Same to Same, on the former receiving, in reply, an Order for two to the Upper Boxes, not admitted after half-past Seven.

Metropolitan Board of Shirks Compromising Architect's Department, Spring Heel Gardens, February 19.

SIR,—I am utterly astounded at the insolence of your response to my request, and thus fling back your tickets (re-enclosed) in your face. Do you know, Sir, who I am? *Are you aware that I can make your theatre too hot to hold you?* Do you reflect that I can force you to open up a dozen,—ay, and if need be, twenty-four—new and roomy exits on every blessed floor in your house. And yet, with this knowledge, you dare to haggle in your mind over the price of three paltry boxes on the Grand Tier. Why, you must be mad!—stark! However, to be plain with you, I'll tell you what it is. Unless you send me by return the places I have named, and which, as an Official of the Board, have the goodness to understand, *I claim as a right*, I'll let loose a Committee of Inspection on you in two twos, without notice, and if, after they've paid you a visit, they leave you a single leg to stand upon, I promise you it won't be the fault of Yours, *meaning business*, officially, JOHN BEGG.

From Same to Same, after receipt of various Complimentary Admissions, making still further demands.

Metropolitan Board of Shirks, Compromising Architect's Department, Spring Heel Gardens, March 1.

MY VERY DEAR SIR,—Thank you for the last six Private Boxes, which, although not all of them in quite first-rate positions, enabled me to knock off a few obligations that I was under to certain importunate friends and connections. But I am now going to tax your kindness still further. *I wish to give all my tradesmen a treat*, and should like them to have the Queen's Box in turn. I am, therefore, sending you the addresses of my butcher, my baker, my bootmaker, milkman, greengrocer, and my tailor, and request that you will communicate directly with them, with a view to finding out on what nights they could most conveniently visit the theatre, and arranging accordingly. Please be careful to direct the envelopes carefully and legibly, as I should be sorry that any carelessness on your part should lead to disagreeables over the matter. Indeed, as long as you keep me well supplied with the places I require on the Grand Tier, I *have no wish to be nasty.* But you know, from experience, it won't do to put my back up, and that rather than put an official spoke into your wheel, I would always prefer to receive your orders, and be able to sign myself, as I do now, Yours cordially, JOHN BEGG.

From Same to Same, on receiving Apologetic and Explanatory Letter enclosing sixteen undated Stalls.

Metropolitan Board of Shirks, Compromising Architect's Department, Spring Heel Gardens, March 4.

MR. BEGG wishes to know whether Mr. HARRIS takes him for a fool. Mr. B. particularly told Mr. H., that he wanted him to let him have the Queen's Box for six consecutive nights, *as he wished to give his*, Mr. B's., *Tradesmen a treat.* How does Mr. H. think Mr. B. is going to manage that in suitable style, in sixteen undated Stalls! But perhaps Mr. H. is desirous *of provoking an Official Inspection*, and would like to be called on to provide a new set of dressing-rooms, a couple of iron-curtains, and be ordered to rebuild his Entrance Hall. Mr. B. merely throws this out as a hint, but would advise Mr. H. *if he wishes to keep out of trouble*, to despatch the demanded boxes, to the addresses already furnished him forthwith.

The HOME SECRETARY said, that after giving the above specimens of correspondence his careful consideration, he could not say that he thought them particularly out of the way, but as there somehow seemed to be a general impression that they were, he supposed something ought to be done. He would think the matter over, and perhaps in the course of next summer he might possibly hit on some solution.

The Deputation having thanked him, then withdrew.

"ALL THE TALENTS."

THE *Graphic's* big picture, representing "All the Talents" of Her Gracious MAJESTY'S reign grouped together in one tremendous crowd, directed apparently on their way down (ominous this!) by Sir JEM of the Academy, contains some of the best portraits that have appeared in any collective illustration. Each one of them separately would be entitled to a place in the splendid *Victoria Album* recently issued by SMITH AND DOWNES, and to say this is saying a great deal. The *Graphic* Stage-Manager has grouped his characters most appropriately. On the extreme right of the spectator is Sir FREDERICK LEIGHTON, P.R.A., staring across at Sir JEM as if wondering why on earth the latter was taking so much authority into his own hands. The Baroness BURDETT COUTTS is well in front, evidently determined to get out first before the crush comes,—an idea that, apparently, has also simultaneously occurred to Messrs. CHAMBERLAIN, BROWNING, ELLEN TERRY, and Lords CHARLES BERESFORD, TENNYSON, SALISBURY, GLADSTONE, "our Mr. TENNIEL," Mrs. BANCROFT (without Mr. B., which accounts for the vacant space next to her, so perhaps he was late, or has politely gone to fetch Mrs. KENDAL, with whom he will appear in the millionth re-issue of this picture), H.E. Cardinal MANNING, apologising for accidentally treading on Madame PATTI'S dress (but it really couldn't be helped), who are all getting away as quickly as possible, either because Mr. SALA, up at the back, or Sir ARTHUR SULLIVAN (who is looking about for Mr. GILBERT) has shouted out, "Get on in front there!" Perhaps—ah!—they are all hurrying off to the Refreshment Room! Or going to stir the Christmas Pudding.

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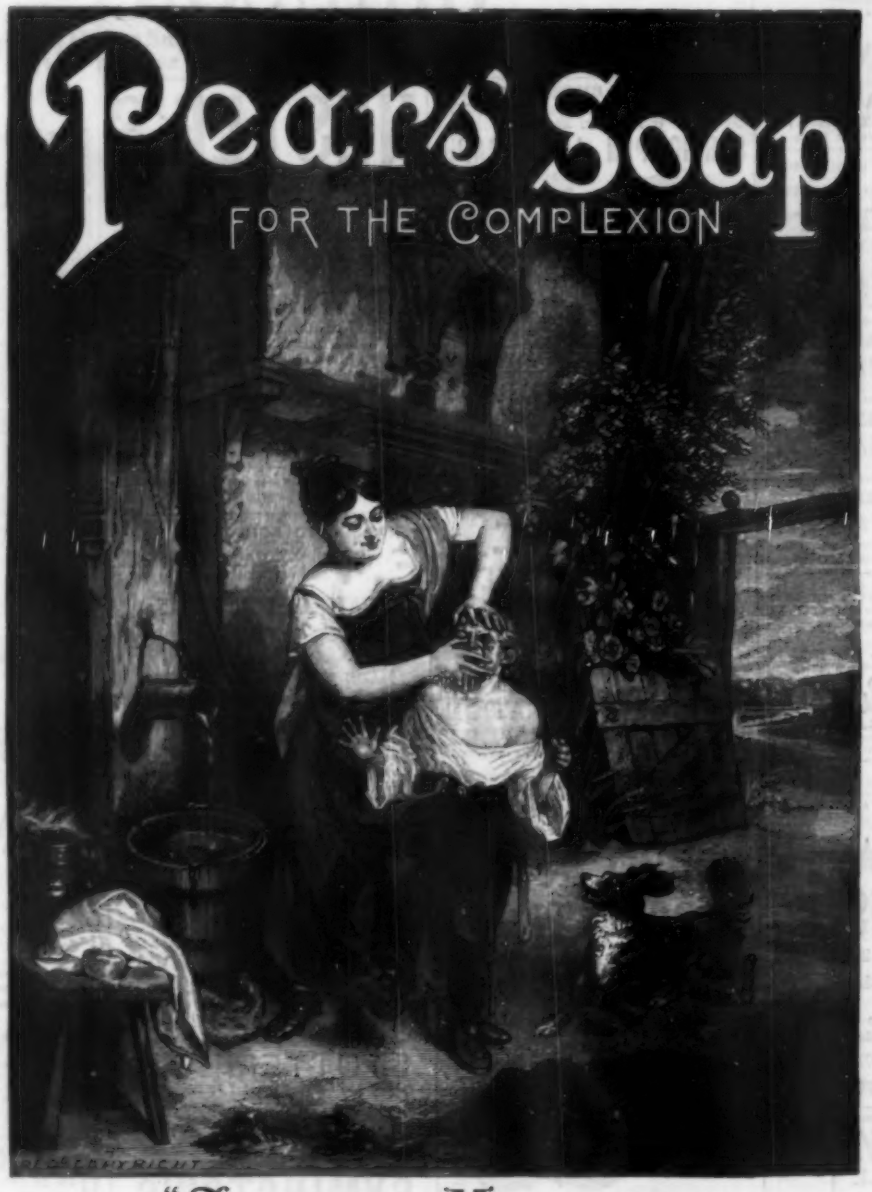

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